



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of DESIGN

at Vilniaus technologijų ir dizaino kolegija

Expert panel:

1. **Prof. Dr. Ian Montgomery (panel chairperson)**, *member of academic community;*
2. **Prof. Dr. Lylian Lainoja**, *member of academic community;*
3. **Doc. Dr. Maria Štranekova**, *member of academic community;*
4. **Dovilė Gaižauskienė**, *representative of social partners;*
5. **Aistė Kazlauskaitė**, *student representative.*

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>Graphic Design</i>	<i>Interior Design</i>
State code	6531PX008	6531PX009
Type of studies	Higher education college studies	Higher education college studies
Cycle of studies	First	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time 3 years	Full-time 3 years
Credit volume	180 ECTS	180 ECTS
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor of Arts	Professional Bachelor of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	30 August 2002	30 August 2002

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No. V-149](#).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the following main stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by a Higher Education Institution (HEI); 2) site visit of the expert panel to the HEI; 3) production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field, SKVC takes a decision to accredit the study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The HEI site visit was conducted by the panel on 28 October 2022.

1. **Prof. Dr. Ian Montgomery (panel chairperson)**, *member of academic community* (United Kingdom); Director of Sustainability, former Pro Vice Chancellor for Global Engagement at Ulster University;
2. **Prof. Dr. Lylian Lainoja**, *member of academic community* (Estonia); lecturer at Tartu Art College; former Dean of the Faculty of Design at The Estonian Academy of Arts;
3. **Doc. Dr. Maria Štranekova**, *member of academic community* (Slovakia); associate professor at Pan European University, Faculty of Media; former Head of Fashion Design department at Tomas Bata University Zlin;
4. **Ms. Dovilė Gaižauskienė**, *representative of social partners* (Lithuania); policy analyst at Government strategic analysis centre (STRATA) (*Policy Lab - strategic design*); former Head of processes at Design department at Vilnius Design college;
5. **Aistė Kazlauskaitė**, *student representative* (Lithuania); fourth-year Bachelor's student of study program *Multimedia and Computer Design* at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VILNIUS TECH).

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site visit:

No.	Name of document
1.	Examples of Bachelor's theses
2.	Course descriptions
3.	Video presentation of the facilities at VTDK

1.4. BACKGROUND OF DESIGN FIELD STUDIES AT VILNIAUS TECHNOLOGIJŲ IR DIZAINO KOLEGIJA

Vilnius College of Technologies & Design (VCTD), established in 2008 is a: *'public legal entity operating as a public institution, having its autonomy, academic, administrative, economic and financial management activities coordinated with accountability to the public, based on the principle of self-governance, academic freedom and respect to human rights.'* (SER, p. 4-5). VCTD offers professional practical training, applied research, experimental development, artistic activities and higher professional education courses. VCTD is led by the College Director and governed via the College and Academic Boards with student interests managed through a Student Representation Union. Professional services activities (e.g., finance, administration, and human resources) are managed.

The College consists of three faculties which in turn host 15 first cycle study programmes in 11 study fields: Design (Design, Media Art), Construction (Construction Engineering; Measurement Engineering; Business), and Technical (Information Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Energy Engineering, Electricity Engineering, Electronics Engineering, Transport Engineering).

During the evaluated period, there were two study programmes implemented as full-time studies in the Design study field: Graphic Design and Interior Design, both of which were reviewed by an international expert group in 2011 and accredited for five years (to 2017) and were further extended until 2020 and subsequently to 2022 in line with other national design reviews.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The *first cycle* of *Design* study field at Vilniaus technologijų ir dizaino kolegija is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	3
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
Total:		23

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market

As stated in the SER (p. 4) “The College links social responsibility with the sustainable development of the region in co-operation with business and art representatives and in developing the skills of individuals and the College’s community to think in an independent and creative manner”. The relevance of the Design study field is also based on national documents, for example, on the 2021-2030 National Progress Program, where cultural and creative industries, the strengthening of creative competencies, and the creative potential, in general, are seen as a driver for generation of the added value.

According to the SER, the content of the study programmes Graphic Design and Interior Design was updated in order to link the content of the programmes with the needs of the labour market and to increase the level of practical skills of the graduates related to the uptake of modern technologies and tendencies. A timely change is an introduction of the study subjects on the interaction of user interfaces in digital environments, the creation of virtual environments, the formation of a sustainable environment, etc., for example, subjects *Sustainable Environment and Human Safety, Creative Business, Design Management*. Focus on interdisciplinary and inter-field cooperation projects is realised in *Art Workshop 1* and *Art Workshop 2* study subjects.

Despite these obviously good measures as well as the good technical skills of graduates as reported by social partners, the visibility of design field study programmes still has to be sharpened by advocating at the college level and further promoting the field together with stakeholders, alumni etc. The school has to examine its ability and ambitions to lead in certain areas, to take advantage of the place of design studies at school among the engineering study field. Interdisciplinarity could be further developed and bring an exceptional study experience for students. In the Expert Panel's opinion, the design process in interdisciplinary projects could be applied more thoroughly without stopping at a few indicated study subjects.

3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI

According to the SER (p. 7-8), the Design study field programmes match the mission of the College with the strategic aim of the College being to create the conditions for the student to acquire high quality professional higher education that meets the needs of the Lithuanian economy and society and the level of science and the latest technologies which is entirely in

line with the Design study field aims. Following meetings with various stakeholder groups, the Expert Panel can endorse these statements as being congruent with the practices and the student-centred learning culture within VTDK. There has been a recent change in senior management and the Expert Panel saw evidence of strong leadership and clarity of purpose with regard to employability for a global market, the creative industries, and sustainability. The Expert Panel is content to endorse VTDK's statement that: "...the Design study field programmes is [sic] harmonized with the mission, aims and strategy of the College" (SER p. 8).

3.1.3. Evaluation of the compliance of the field and cycle study programme with legal requirements

The credit distribution within the study programmes of the design study field, including the share devoted optional studies and internship, as well as contact hours/hours dedicated to practical training and other practice placements in the programmes adhere to „General Requirements for the provision of studies“, 30 December 2016 No. V-1168, The Descriptor of the Study field of Design 2021-03-18 No. 2021-05451; and General requirements for the provision of studies 2021 November 16 No. V-410.

3.1.4. Evaluation of compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes

The Expert Panel met academic staff and student groups and discussed a range of topics including curriculum design, teaching and learning, and assessment and were reassured that the design of modules and learning experiences are clear, progressive in challenge, and communicated with clarity. There appears to be a high level of partnership working and the module requirements, formative and summative feedback and the integration of appropriate projects including engagement with social partners are well planned. The work on exhibition in the various studios is commensurate with level outcomes nationally and internationally. Students are involved in programme development and decision-making and are able to express their own style and suggest projects, as well as articulate how they were supported in participating in external projects - all of which make for a lively and interesting design programme which coherently integrates teaching and learning methods within studios and workshops.

3.1.5. Evaluation of the totality of the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competencies of students

The Expert Panel was reassured that students were supported in their learning through core mandatory and elective modules as part of the wider curriculum experience. Within the design discipline, students undertake a series of core learning modules covering design visualisation skills, history and theory, and professional development including 'Drawing and Art', 'Composition', 'Colour Theory', 'Typography', 'Cultural History', 'Design History', 'Fundamentals of Photography', 'Creative Business' and 'Applied Research' (SER p. 11). The

programme-specific modules are relevant, current, and commensurate with module types offered in similar programmes in design schools across Europe.

VTDK's strong link with industry, alumni, and social partners is to be commended in that as students gear themselves towards professional practice. Social partners form a key part of the final year student project development. This strong education-industry partnership provides an excellent springboard for final-year students wishing to develop their own design projects in the context of professional design studios to develop industry-relevant professional and presentation skills.

3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes

VTDK offers a range of elective study modules in various areas including web design, packaging design, and professional ethics. The opportunity to take elective modules runs throughout the programme levels and students can further develop their skills through placement opportunities and/or via the virtual learning environment - which was also mentioned by students during the Expert Panel meeting. Moreover, during the Expert Panel meetings with students and academic staff, there were numerous references to self-directed project-based learning during which students can develop their own style and individualise their own design resolutions whilst improving their design problem-solving skills.

3.1.7. Evaluation of compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements

The final theses at the College are prepared in accordance with *The Description of Procedure of Preparation, Evaluation and Storage of Final Thesis* (SER, p. 12). The final thesis is evaluated by the qualification commission, consisting of no less than 5 people, including representatives of social stakeholders (no less than half of the commission's members). The thesis work of students is supervised by one of the teaching staff members. Students' final theses can be prepared in collaboration with a company and clients - students are encouraged to use their placement in the company to secure the company's support and relevant topic for the thesis.

Students, who have chosen the field of their final thesis, determine the topic and the objectives of the final thesis together with the supervisor of the final thesis. According to the SER (p. 13), "When preparing their final theses, students solve design field problems, use analytical and various creative methods, perform applied research, process their outcomes and prepare conclusions by adapting them in the design field projects."

The Expert Panel's visit to the College revealed that thesis works have a high level of technical skills, relevant topics, and good project presentation standards. However, it would be suggested to focus on digital presentation more, paying attention to more sustainable and innovative ways of project communication.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. High technical skills of students as reported by social partners and witnessed by the Expert Panel.
2. Strong support and partnership working between academic staff, students, and social partners.

(2) Weaknesses:

The Expert Panel identified two minor weaknesses:

1. Interdisciplinary projects of the design and other fields in the institution should be more extensively applied.
2. Final thesis communication could be much more digital.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study

Each year the College presents data about the performed applied scientific research, art works and the funds earned from them for evaluation according to the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania regulating the process of scientific research and experimental development. Those activities are constantly growing, showing the development in the design field, and the financial income acquired due to their quality (SER p. 17).

VTDK, which is financially supported by state funds, has a well-functioning system of evaluation and support in order to activate the works of applied scientific research, and artistic activity, which is organised by the Science Fund. During the evaluated period 2021, the design field fund was granted 30,000 Eur from the 150,000 Eur total budget for the intentions to organise and support scientific/artistic activity and experimental development in VTDK, to perform high-quality and productive scientific/artistic work and to support the dissemination of this production. As stated in the SER, the financial funding is exponentially growing every year for the evaluated area.

The participation of the teaching staff members of the design study field in applied research activities is evident. Table 2 (SER, p. 19-21) proves that there is strong cooperation with external stakeholders (foreign higher education institutions, Lithuanian companies and public sector and science institutions) in implementing artistic/applied science activities.

Design studies have also new smart plans for the future (SER, p. 22) of implementing applied artistic activities in various fields, for example, virtual reality in interior design projects, augmented reality use, harmonizing of traditional printing techniques with digital image

technologies etc. The development aims of studies and science, for example, to partake in the sustainable development of society (SER, p. 22) are commensurate with contemporary European values.

During the site visit, the Expert Panel, however, noticed the absence of a dynamic creative and artistic setting within the facility which might hold back the students from engaging in informal work and actively exploring ideas which could make valuable contributions to the broader creative and cultural scene in VTDK.

3.2.2. Evaluation of the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology

The Expert Panel was informed of the investment strategy by the Senior Management team and the disbursement of funds through annual strategic resource planning for staff development, digital skills training, and the purchase of equipment and infrastructure with regard to ensuring VTDK is operating at a level commensurate with latest developments in science and technology. Staff are participants in several professional design associations and conferences as well as travelling internationally to lectures, conferences, and discussions. VTDK continues to develop its staff-led curriculum offerings, particularly in digital design for the purposes of developing student learning and skills towards professional practice in the creative industries.

3.2.3. Evaluation of conditions for students to get involved in scientific (applied science, art) activities consistent with their study cycle

The Expert Panel observed that students are provided with proper conditions of inclusion in artistic/applied science activities. Students increasingly perform individual and group creative projects, take part in art events, competitions and creative workshops in the College of higher education and elsewhere, present the outcomes of their creative work in exhibitions and conferences, and perform works of experimental development.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The content of the Design study field programmes is systematically updated with regard to the latest artistic and technological changes in the design area.
3. The allocation of funding for staff, equipment, and infrastructure development.
4. Increasing number of students involved in artistic activities and experimental development beyond technical design training.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Lack of a vibrant creative and artistic environment in the main building to afford students the opportunity to work informally, feel comfortable in the environment, experience ideas in action, and contribute to the wider creative and cultural offering in VTDK.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.3.1. Evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process

Both state-funded and non-state-funded places are available in VTDK with admission following review and successful attainment of competition score threshold. Students are enrolled in the design field study programmes in line with student admissions procedures published annually by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania (SER p. 24). Student admissions conform to the Minister of Education, Science and Sports requirements and those of the Lithuanian Association for Higher Education Institution for Organization of Centralised Admission (LAMA BPO). VTDK admissions also comply with *The Description of Procedure of Organization and Implementation of General Admission Exams to College Art Study Field Groups and Art Education Study Programmes*. Applicants must attain both examination and additional conditions in line with the order of the President of the Lithuanian Confederation of Directors of Colleges of Higher Education. Direct entry procedures are also available for non-state-funded applicants.

3.3.2. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application

VTDK operates a scheme of recognising qualifications nationally and internationally with partner institutions including foreign qualifications via *The Procedure of Crediting of Study Results* (SER p. 26). This procedure applied to 24 students of the *Design* study field (2019-2021) and 21 students working in foreign design companies. According to the SER, all students studied in accordance with mobility agreements with some choosing to study additional subjects which were credited and included in the supplement of the student's diploma.

Qualification credit for learning acquired abroad is provided to students both through the Dean's offices (Studies & Career Centre) and in faculties by coordinators of international relations.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

VTDK is an active participant in the Erasmus+ programme which is advertised via the College website. Students are made aware of mobility opportunities via student meetings and email about procedures, choosing partners, selection criteria, contracts, and through individual meetings with the Erasmus+ co-ordinator. As part of the introduction to how Erasmus+ works, past student participants outline their experiences and provide insights and advice for prospective applicants, and academic staff participate in meetings with the students. Further, the VTDK website and Facebook pages include useful information on a range of topics related to outward student mobility ("Experiences of students, who have tried Erasmus+ studies",

“Experiences of students, who have tried Erasmus+ practical training”) (SER p. 27). VTDK has over 35 higher education partner institutions within the design study field including institutions in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Bulgaria as well as links with design companies in the Czech Republic, Portugal, and Spain. Both during and post-pandemic some students have come to VTDK from other institutions in Latvia, Serbia, Poland, Belgium, Turkey, Croatia, Ukraine, and Denmark. VTDK’s inward and outward mobility procedures comply with the required standards and procedures, however, international partnerships with cognate institutions could be developed to a higher level to cultivate even stronger international ties and wider exchange opportunities.

3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field

VTDK operates various systems which provide students with academic, social, financial and other support. The project-based nature of the design discipline often dictates that there is constant communication between students and supervisors. VTDK has put in place procedures to support students including web-based information, student consultations, extra skills support classes, and recognition of students who face challenges in progressing in their course of study and who must comply with given resit procedures (according to the *Description of Liquidation of Academic Debts*, SER p. 29).

VTDK students are also supported through scholarships and have access to loans and receive financial support for studies and residential expenses. Some high-performing students study in state-funded places and receive incentive scholarships for high performance related to learning outcomes which have increased in value since 2022. According to the SER (p. 29), students are paid bonuses for active public, artistic, and sports activities or participation in projects, and competitions, or for being an active Students Union Representative.

Students have access to a gymnasium with group and personal training available as well as access to wider cultural activities. Students can also live in newly modernised dormitories throughout all years of study. Students with health problems or who cannot attend for personal reasons are supported via an alternative arrangement which was established by VTDK through the *Provisions of payment of scholarships and provision of other support to students* (SER p. 29). However, there is no mention of ongoing student support through a counselling and guidance service for instance.

VTDK operates a Careers Centre which offers specialist advice, organises training and meetings with graduates and social partners. The Centre also provides Careers Days where graduates and employers actively present their work and engage with students.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

VTDK operates an excellent website that presents clear information about the design (and other) disciplines and related information related to the wider operations of the College. VTDK

also communicates with students via other channels including email. Newly registered students are inducted using the core module 'Introduction to Studies' which outlines how learning is sequenced, study options, skills acquisition, and training. Module inductions also include outlines by lecturing staff including descriptions of module content, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria. Academic research skills are also presented through information on how to use the library, databases, and internet-based resources. According to the SER, as modules are updated so, students are kept abreast of developments via the College website. Although the SER notes that "Students claim that the provided consultations are sufficient, information is provided on time, systematically and properly" (SER p. 30) explicit mention of information and procedures relating to student counselling was generally lacking in the document. Moreover, there could be a more prominent and lively presence of the design field on social media.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Clear and well-supported procedures for inward and outward student mobility.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. There is a need to strengthen the relationships with partner institutions to fully capitalize on the opportunities available for outward and inward student mobility.
2. There does not appear to be a student counselling and guidance service.
3. Lack of a well-developed social media presence.

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes

Design study field studies are conducted as full-time studies aiming at the development of competencies and certain knowledge of subjects, as well as general competencies based on the needs of the labour market. According to the SER, students of the Design study field may individualise their studies by choosing the study subjects according to their needs and placement places for internships. Students of 'Graphic Design' study programme may choose one of three specialities: 'Website Design', 'Design of Publications and Illustrations' or 'Packaging Design'. If it is necessary to acquire additional knowledge from other study fields, a student may choose optional course units from other study programmes but this is not a popular choice among students.

For independent studies when students have to complete independent work, a distant virtual learning environment Moodle is used.

Various teaching methods are employed and that creates the opportunity for students to choose methods that suit them better. However, it is recommended to create even more opportunities for students to make their own decision on their learning path by introducing a studio-based learning environment, and by providing even more subjects to choose from for broadening design skills. Choice of specialities and choice of one design area can help to focus on it but on the other hand, design should be more problem or phenomena based. It would be suggested to strengthen individual design process management and implementation skills and movement across different design areas.

3.4.2. Evaluation of conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs

As stated in the SER, the College aims at ensuring inclusive and equally high-quality studies for students with special needs and students from socially vulnerable groups, to study at their individual pace, use distant learning, take into account their abilities, needs and interests. The schedule of individual virtual or live consultations is provided by the teaching staff so that students can get support at a time which is suitable for them. There are relevant regulations which are followed by teaching staff and administration. The College has regulated financial support provided to people with special needs. In order to ensure good quality of reaching and evaluation of achieved learning outcomes, students with special needs are provided with assistance and physical spaces that are adopted for their needs according to the principle of universal design. No significant shortcomings were found in this area.

3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress

The achieved learning outcomes are analysed and discussed in the department and at the study programme committee meetings twice a year after the each semester. At the end of an academic year, the final report of the progress of a student group of that academic year is prepared, and the level of attained learning outcomes is analysed, which can lead to the implementation of additional consultations by teaching staff or other measures (SER, p. 34).

The College has an established surveying system. The generalised results of the questionnaire are submitted to the students. "The teaching staff member, who has taught the subject, is presented with the results of the questionnaire on that subject during a private conversation with the *Dean* of the faculty" (SER, p. 34). Generalised results of questionnaires are publicly presented in student and teaching staff meetings. However, the SER nor the data collected during meetings show a self-assessment system available for students. The Expert Panel would encourage the College community to rely more on self-assessment rather than autonomous surveying. Public discussions around the results would also help to create more free space.

3.4.4. Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field

“The College has a Career Centre, where the specialists consult students on employment matters, organise training, meetings with graduates and social stakeholders. Each year, the event Career Days is organised for the students of the field, where employers and graduates of the Design Faculty are active participants” (SER, p. 29). It is a very good practice and the College should be proud of it. The Expert Panel encourages thinking even further and have workshops, idea sprints etc. as an addition to the event.

As stated in SER (p. 35), employers highly value design field studies, as evidenced by the graduates' income post-graduation. Data from the Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA), which monitors employability statistics and income, indicates that Design graduates enjoy comparatively high income levels. No doubt, income is an important indicator of the value of the designer in the labour market but it would be suggested to look into a more broad value that is created by design for the society or businesses. Even though SER (p. 35) states that “88.2 percent of employers evaluate the readiness of graduates for their professional activities, their acquired theoretical and practical knowledge as excellent or very good,” it is not sufficient information in case the knowledge about the businesses is not provided and the comparability of this indicator to other relevant data is in question. A more “serious” and in-depth analysis and assessment are needed. A question could be formulated as follows: does the school have the ambition to teach designers who are able to lead businesses by design or are they preparing designers who follow businesses?

In accordance with the data provided by the Education Management Information System and presented in the SER (p. 35), the employability of graduates in the Design study field has experienced a decline, with rates dropping from 67 percent in 2019 to 55 percent in 2020, and further down to 16 percent in 2021. This decrease is attributed to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which led to the suspension or closure of a majority of design field companies. However, even if Covid-19 is the partial reason, the school should take into account that the employability rate is dropping and therefore think about the measures on how to help their graduates in their careers. The Career Center could also focus not only on how to find a first workplace but also on how to sustain a professional career.

It is important to highlight that, the Design Department's analysis showed that a majority of graduates (81.4 percent) confirmed the College's employment of professional teaching staff who provide current knowledge and develop competencies for successful competition in the labour market. Graduates expressed satisfaction with their theoretical (77.8 percent) and practical (52.4 percent) knowledge. Practical training and equipment received high ratings (79.4 percent), while study field programmes were deemed good by 74.1 percent. Overall, the analysis affirmed graduates' competence to secure desired job positions (SER, p. 35). This positive attitude of graduates should be further nourished and the College could look deeper into how the careers of their graduates develop and how both parties could find benefits especially because of the fact that the school is not providing second cycle studies and is vulnerable to staff availability, thus, graduates could need further positive impulses and

knowledge for advancing in professional life.

3.4.5. Evaluation of the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination

The College regulates the policies of academic honesty, tolerance and non-discrimination in the Design study field. The documents of the College such as *Provisions of Studies, Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius College of Technologies and Design, Statutes of Activity of Committee of Ethics, Description of Procedure of Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment or Stalking* ensure transparency, honesty, justice, and equality in education and studies by implementing measures that promote non-discrimination and hold individuals accountable for impartial evaluation of study assignments (SER, p. 36). The College also has the *Committee of Ethics*, which analyses violations of academic ethics, the students are asked to sign the declaration of honesty, in this way declaring honest performance of their academic assignments (SER, p. 36). Collegial evaluation of learning outcomes and informal atmosphere are the main drivers to ensure that principles of openness are followed. No shortcoming in this area was observed.

3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies

The College has the *Description of Procedure of Submission and Analysis of Student Appeals of Evaluation of Knowledge and Procedural Violations*, to address any appeals and procedural violations related to the evaluation of student knowledge (SER, p. 36). Students have the right to appeal and appeals can be made for both positive and negative knowledge evaluations. However, appeals regarding the evaluation of the final thesis are limited to procedural violations that occurred during the thesis defense. No appeals were submitted during the analysed period. No shortcoming in this area was observed.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The extensive usage of the virtual learning environment is allowing students to participate in the study process even if they are not present in the lectures.

(2) Weaknesses:

The Expert Panel identified two minor weaknesses:

1. The need for improvement in individual design process management and implementation skills, as well as the ability to navigate effectively across different design areas and broaden the design skills by a wider variety of subjects.
2. No clear measures on how to sustain the professional careers of graduates and how to measure their impact on the economy and societal issues.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes

The Expert Panel met with a variety of teaching staff from the different courses. Whilst the number of teaching staff has fluctuated over the past 3 years (32 in 2019; 29 in 2020; and 30 in 2021), the numbers of students have risen by 12 overall in the Design discipline (SER p. 38). The Senior Management team outlined to the Expert Panel their plans for developing staff competencies including enhancing digital skills. The academic staff profile is appropriate for the subjects they teach and for meeting government requirements (*Republic of Lithuania Law on Science and Studies, Statutes of the College, General Requirements for Implementation of Studies*). Ongoing staff development is undertaken through a 5-year review (monitoring) process and further ongoing feedback regarding the quality of teaching is also provided through student questionnaires.

Staff are recruited according to the changing requirements of the design discipline and there is an effective method of succession planning through, where possible a planned handover to new staff by retiring staff and subsequent mentoring by a senior academic. According to the SER (p. 38), recruitment is undertaken in line with the *Description of Procedure of Organization of Certification of Teaching Staff of Vilnius College of Technologies and Design and Public Competitions for Positions*. Academic staff continue to develop their own research and practice beyond their teaching commitments. As this is a College, as opposed to a University, it would nonetheless be helpful for VTDK to develop and celebrate academic applied research that promotes higher-level thinking results and innovative solutions in student work, for the benefit of students and campus visitors.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staff's academic mobility

The Senior Leadership team outlined to the Expert Panel their work in developing strategic international partnerships in, for example, Denmark, Portugal, and Bulgaria. Outward staff mobility is facilitated through internships, participation at conferences, via seminars, and in teaching and training visits. Academic staff mobility is regulated through the *Procedure of Organization of Mobility approved by the College* (SER p. 40). VTDK has put in place arrangements with specific regard to Erasmus+ through the *Description of Procedure of Participation in Mobility Activities of Erasmus+* through which 21 academic staff participated in 13 countries. Inwardly mobile academic staff visited VTDK from other European countries including Portugal, Poland, Slovenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Latvia, Serbia, and Bulgaria. They have also put in place arrangements for evaluating and supporting staff outward mobility applications/requests taking into consideration the necessity to protect the student learning experience.

3.5.3. Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competencies of the teaching staff

The SER (p. 42) outlines procedures for supporting and improving staff competencies. The Senior Leadership team outlined their commitment to developing staff at VTDK, specifically citing digital skills. They also discussed their long-term strategy for resource management over the next 3-5 years both in terms of equipment and ministerial support in making applied research compulsory. Academic staff are encouraged to participate in competitions, seminars, conferences, internships, “Erasmus+” and other international programmes, and via PhD study. According to the SER (p. 42), the planning of academic staff development is undertaken with line managers and includes courses on methods of active teaching/pedagogy, reflection, and assessment methods for in-person and online delivery.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. There is a strong technical, applied, and industry-focused ethos within the staff profile and development activities.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. A lack of visible evidence of applied staff research towards higher level thinking - and therefore a lack of creative risk-taking towards cutting edge solutions evident in student work.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process

The Expert Panel was given a tour of studios, workshops, library, and gallery within VTDK whose Design Faculty comprises 49 auditoriums and studios and 4 laboratories which have been refurbished and developed using EU structural funds through a process of *Modernization of Infrastructure of Studies in Vilnius College of Technologies and Design* (SER p. 44). In line with physical developments, a series of practical applied training courses in the use of design workshop equipment and in the computing and printing areas are also noted in the SER. The dissemination of creative design outputs in the gallery space has limited impact as it is located away from the main areas of student activity and is not open to the public.

The Expert Panel were given a tour of the VTDK library which is well-resourced with appropriate books and periodicals. The staff are fully conversant with the needs of design students, and the electronic search and bibliographic systems (the ‘Lithuanian Academic

Electronic Library' (eLABa)) they employ are suitable for academic staff and students to develop and progress their work and studies. Staff and students can also access eLABa remotely.

The VTDK Senior Management team outlined their strategy for resource management over the next 3-5 years during which they have a precise plan for purchasing and updating existing resources. They outlined an investment strategy for science and research to fund all areas of study including the design disciplines. The Expert Panel were also informed of the Ministry of Education's plan to make applied research compulsory, specifically in 'artistic' (inc. design) areas. Further, the Senior Management also outlined their plan to improve competencies with funding for staff development.

The Self-Evaluation Reporting group also stated that resources are allocated in line with study programme needs which were updated yearly. This group also informed the Expert Panel that resource allocation is planned annually at both College management and faculty levels and is directly related to student numbers and for applied/artistic research activities. Further, financial resources are also allocated to non-formal courses for new equipment which is done in partnership with closely aligned faculties, for example, the Faculties of Technology, and Civil Engineering. The academic staff team highlighted a major recent positive change in resource planning and that needs/requests are usually fulfilled and needs always met for new initiatives. Students stated that some workshop materials are available free of charge, that access to workshops and computer laboratories is good, and that access to 2D and 3D printing is also good, although there is a lack of large format printing. However, it appeared that there was a difficulty in accessing software off-campus and a lack of budget for final student theses, something the College may wish to develop in future.

3.6.2. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies

The response of VTDK's Senior Management team and Faculty staff confirmed the strategic approaches taken to resource planning and deployment as presented in the SER (p. 44). Resource planning across a range of equipment and material types is undertaken annually and in line with course and student/staff needs. Social partners also support mainly through the supply of journals, paper and materials. VTDK has also set up a strategic alliance with Kaunas Technical College for the purposes of purchasing technical equipment including software.

Although the design field is only part of the College's array of offerings, normally within a creative environment there is evidence of work in progress and the texting of new ideas through visuals and prototypes. VTDK's physical environment lacks the vibrancy one would traditionally associate with a design school.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Good evidence of resource planning and an ambition to develop the human and physical capital of the institution.
2. Good evidence of a collegiate approach to resource access across the College.
3. Strong support for the design field through the donation of materials and in kind from social partners.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Lack of off-campus access to design software or budget for final student theses.
2. Lack of visibility of a design school ethos in the publicly accessible parts of the building and a design gallery that lacks prominence.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.7.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies

According to the SER (p. 48), the design study field quality assurance is based on *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* and through the presentation of evidence in the SER and meetings with the Expert Panel the evidence confirms that it meets government standards. Further, the *Internal Study Quality Management Assurance System* functions within a wider quality management system also incorporating the College's own *Quality Assurance Policy* and *Quality Manual* as well as ongoing review of academic provision by internal and external assessors.

Expert Panel meetings with various key stakeholders (Senior Management team, Faculty, academic staff, students, and social partners) confirmed that a variety of appropriate systems and procedures are in place to deal with VTDK's different quality assurance requirements. The Academic Board shapes and oversees study quality, quality assurance, and certification of academic staff and the Centre for Studies and Career is responsible for information quality, admission, careers advice, and employability data (provided by the Employment Service Under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania).

At the Faculty level, the Dean is responsible for assuring quality within the design discipline, staff development, faculty infrastructure, and student liaison regarding ongoing course development. Faculty Board oversees programme provision, course development, and annual staff teaching evaluations. At the department level, there is a greater level of granularity in addressing course-specific matters including timetabling, resource use, links to social partners, the appointment of supervisors, and the review and assessment of ongoing student projects. At the course level, the Study Programme Committee for Graphic Design and Interior Design focuses on module descriptions and content, reviews learning outcomes, evaluates student progress, reviews student feedback, employability trends, and maintains links with

individual social partners.

Various other quality review systems are in place including student questionnaires, meetings with employers, annual programme review, student placement/internship performance, academic staff development activities and performance, and student academic attainment.

The Expert Panel is reassured that the various quality assurance mechanisms evident across the various levels are both appropriate and functioning according to their requirements.

3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance

The Expert Panel met with students from various year groups of both courses and with social partners that included alumni and industrial placement providers. Representation from students and social partners was strong. Students confirmed their participation in programme development and that they are encouraged to express their own design solutions and suggest projects - they felt involved as participants in course development. Students also confirmed their participation in feedback questionnaires two or three times per academic year, within which they are free to express their likes and dislikes of various aspects of the course. They also confirmed their constant interaction and partnership with academic staff with regard to decision-making and opportunities to have the students' voice heard.

Social partners praised VTDK for developing graduates who are technically literate and 'work-ready', but who could be developed more in their design thinking skills. They complete questionnaires and feedback is normally in relation to individual academic staff who liaise directly with placement providers. Graduates' opinion is also sought via a questionnaire which is used to quality assure programmes and to provide information for ongoing course development. Engagement with stakeholders is planned, ongoing, and designed to create a flexible culture of positive and progressive change within VTDK.

3.7.3. Evaluation of the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes

VTDK has a comprehensive website containing a full suite of information sets relating its operations including to governance, admissions, course prospectuses, quality procedures, opportunities for outward mobility, and facilities.

Information about admissions data, student progression and retention, graduate numbers, degree classifications, and other projects and activities are discussed internally in a variety of fora. The Expert Panel were reassured that various processes of continual development are in place to ensure systems and procedures are constantly reviewed, evaluated, and developed in line with feedback and with new developments at national and international level.

3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI

VTDK collects student feedback on the quality of studies in line with the College's *Description of Procedure of Organization of Feedback for Improvement of Study Quality* (SER p. 52). Questionnaires are approved by the Academic Board and focus on: teaching and professionalism of teaching staff, quality of services provided, personal development, and the extent of student achievement. Results are analysed through Study Programme Committees with students being overall satisfied with the education they are receiving (SER p. 52). VTDK implements quality enhancement questionnaires in regard to graduates and employees, social stakeholders, and students studying in field studies.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Quality assurance measures are fit for purpose and operate in the best interests of the student.
2. Social partners/stakeholders were highly supportive of the graduates and their suitability for working in technical design environments.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The feedback of external stakeholders on the kind of skills students should exhibit could be more fully detected and integrated.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Core definition: Excellence means exhibiting exceptional characteristics that are, implicitly, not achievable by all.

VTDK is an ambitious and forward-looking institution that has developed strong and productive partnerships with various professional and industrial stakeholders. The technical skills level of graduates is well suited to the needs of design and production companies.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	Students have a high level of technical skill as reported by social partners and witnessed by the expert panel, and there is strong support and partnership working between academic staff, students, and social partners. However, it is recommended to enhance interdisciplinarity and for the final thesis communication to develop its digital presence and credentials.
Links between science (art) and studies	The content of the design study field programmes is systematically updated with regard to the latest artistic and technological changes in the design area and is supported through funding for staff, equipment, and infrastructure development. There is also an increasing number of students involved in artistic activities and experimental development beyond technical design training. However, there is a lack of a vibrant creative and artistic environment in the main building to afford students the opportunity to work informally, feel comfortable in the environment, experience ideas in action, and contribute to the wider creative and cultural offering in VTDK. It is recommended that VTDK develop significantly the visible identity and showcase the excellent student and staff work both as outputs and as work in progress.
Student admission and support	There are clear and well-supported procedures for inward and outward student mobility. However, in order to create further opportunities for outward and inward student mobility, it is recommended that for the benefit of students and staff a stronger network of partner institutions is developed nationally and internationally. Moreover, there does not appear to be a student counselling and guidance service and VTDK is encouraged to develop and extend the reach of such a service. Social media presence could also be enhanced by more creative exposure of the design study field.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	The extensive usage of virtual learning environment is allowing students to participate in the study process even if they are not present in the lectures. However, it is recommended to enhance the autonomy of students in shaping their learning path by implementing a studio-based learning environment and offering a wider range of subjects to foster the development of their design skills. While specialization and choosing a specific design area can facilitate focus, it is important to ensure that design education is problem or phenomena-based. Strengthening individual design process management and the ability to navigate across different design areas should be encouraged. Also, there are no clear measures on how to sustain the professional careers of graduates and how to

	<p>measure their impact on the economy, or societal issues more generally. It is therefore recommended that VTDK develop its careers and student employment data and information for the purposes of strengthening and celebrating its strong industry links. Moreover, the systemic analysis of student feedback could also include a self-assessment approach.</p>
Teaching staff	<p>There is a strong technical, applied, and industry-focused ethos within the staff profile and development activities. However, there is a lack of visible evidence of applied staff research towards higher level thinking and a lack of creative risk-taking towards cutting edge solutions evident in student work. It is recommended that VTDK engage in, and promote more creative risk-taking projects that develop its innovation credentials both internally and to the outside world.</p>
Learning facilities and resources	<p>There is good evidence of resource planning and an ambition to develop the human and physical capital of the institution, a collegiate approach to resource access across the College, and strong support from social partners. However, there is a lack of off-campus access to design software, budget for final student thesis, large format printing equipment and the visibility of a design school ethos in the publicly accessible parts of the building and a design gallery that lacks prominence and dissemination of creative design outputs as it is located away from the main areas of student activity and is not open to the public. It is recommended that VTDK develops its outward-looking corporate identity and strengthen support for off-campus software access.</p>
Study quality management and public information	<p>Quality assurance measures are fit for purpose and operate in the best interests of the student and social partners/stakeholders were highly supportive of the graduates and their suitability for working in technical design environments. However, the institution should ensure that the quality assurance system detects and integrates the feedback from social partners on what kind of skills need to be advanced, one of them being design-orientated thinking.</p>

VI. SUMMARY

The new leadership at Vilniaus technologijų ir dizaino kolegija (VTDK) shows clear ambition with a focus on developing capacity, capability, and innovation both within the design field and beyond. The panel was reassured by the strong leadership team ethos and the pride displayed by staff, students, and social partners in the ongoing work of the College.

The College operates according to national documents, the structure and management of the Design study field are clear but the Expert Panel got the impression that the school is still on the journey to find its own voice. Despite many good practices and measures as well as good technical skills of graduates as reported by social partners, the visibility of design field study programmes still has to be sharpened by advocating at the college level and further promoting the potential of the design field together with stakeholders, alumni etc.

A more “serious” and in-depth analysis and assessment of the College's role in the design arena in Lithuania and beyond is needed. The Expert Panel concluded that some uncertainty exists about whether the College’s ambition is to teach designers who are able to lead businesses by design or is preparing designers who follow businesses. In order to strengthen the innovation culture in the College and to prepare undergraduates for operating at the top flight of the design profession, VTDK is encouraged to be more forthright in their creative risk-taking, be visible through submission to and celebration of participation in national and international competitions, and to create a more engaged and engaging visible presence in annual degree shows, academic attainment awards ceremonies, social partner awards, and online through web and social media showcases.

A sincere wish of the Expert Panel for the School is to examine its ability and ambitions to lead in certain areas and to take advantage of the place of design studies at school in the engineering study field. Interdisciplinarity could be further developed and bring an exceptional study experience for students. In the Expert Panel’s opinion, the design process in interdisciplinary projects could be applied more thoroughly without stopping at a few indicated study subjects. The choice of specialities and choice of one design area can help to focus students on a deeper understanding of certain areas of design but on the other hand, design should be more problem or phenomena based - it would be suggested to strengthen individual design process management and implementation skills and movement across different design areas.

The enthusiastic engagement of the VTDK leadership and other stakeholder teams shows that this is an exciting time for the College in its planning for growth and development in curriculum development, in resource planning, and in the introduction of new ideas and initiatives. The Expert Panel wishes VTDK success with their future plans.

Expert panel chairperson signature:

Prof. Dr. Ian Montgomery

